DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 158 554 EC 111 955

AUTHOR Kalu, Wilhelmina J.
TITLE Salvage Operation: The Head Teacher and the Future of Special Education in Nigeria.
PUB DATE Jun 78
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the World Congress on Future Special Education (First, Stirling, Scotland, June 25 - July 1, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Trends; *Foreign Countries; *Handicapped Children; *Public Policy; Special Education; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The paper reviews trends in special education in Nigeria, including a discussion on national policy and such problems as lack of trained personnel and facilities. The author suggests, based on a pilot study involving 48 Head Teachers, that Head Teachers could have a prominent role in improving special education services. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED158554

SALVAGE OPERATION: The Head Teacher and the Future of Special Education in Nigeria

by

Wilhelmina J. Kalu
Department of Education
University of Nigeria

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

A significant development in post-Independence Nigeria has been the increasing assertion by the State to increase her control of social welfare institutions. This area had been the monopoly of Christian missions and few philanthropic organizations. Thus, in recent years, the State has taken over schools and produced an elaborate policy on education. The state has also enunciated a social ideology which could not be branded as socialist but which seeks to pay more attention to the disadvantaged, the illiterate and the rural dwellers. It is recognized that to build a viable federal state will mean a better distribution of material resources and mobilization of all the human resources.

Special Education has, therefore, received attention in the last couple of years because for a long time Nigeria has been plagued with the problem of loitering beggars--blind, deaf and mute, physically disabled and so on. Foreigners visiting Nigeria were often shocked with the sight of so many disadvantaged persons crowding public places and streets to beg. The harsh climatic conditions in certain parts of the country, the incidence of certain tropical diseases, and low level of social development and incursions from poor neighbours in drought-ridden Sahel swelled the numbers. The Nigerian government has, also recently, earned enough money from oil exportation to enable her to pay more attention to the

EC 111955

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C.E.C.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

level of social development. A policy on Special Education therefore, has been enunciated and operationalized.

The aim of this paper is duofold: firstly, we shall briefly review the trend of Special Education in Nigeria, the national policy and the problems in the operation. Secondly, we shall suggest a short-term solution centered on the enriched role of the Head Teacher in the operation of the national policy on Special Education. This could only be a short-term solution because the opportunities exist for a more thorough going solution to an urgent problem.

I. THE TREND OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

In traditional Nigerian societies, the community hardly took care of the disadvantaged. The task was left to the kin group. The perception of the disadvantaged was that they were the victims of either malevolent spirits or human enemies. As soon as diviners and medicine men failed to reverse the physical manifestations of evil forces which invested the human world like an army, people resigned from doing anything about the victims. They were hardly pitied and consciences were not seared by their presence. This is important because we find here the origin of certain attitudes which have persisted in contemporary Nigeria.

The colonial period brought little relief and certainly no concerted government policy. For one, the colonial government was strapped for funds and personnel, pursued limited goals and most willingly left social welfare issues to the missionary bodies.

The missionary bodies, on their part, discovered that operation of charitable institutions yielded rapid and huge dividends. It was a means

of webbing and baptizing large numbers of individuals. However, it soon became obvious that schools and hospitals achieved this goal faster than other forms of charitable institutions. No viable and extensive programme on Special Education emerged: a leper colony here, a home for the disabled there and a medical research unit on blindness constituted the extent of missionary programme. To combat slavery, both the government and the missions exercised greater concern over loitering children who were separated from their parents.

The situation in contemporary Nigeria reflects this background. The public complain about the harrassment by beggars and the disgusting sights in Nigerian streets but many do not conceive that they have a duty towards the disadvantaged. The traditional perception of the disadvantaged has survived.

Not fully so. There is a slightly growing concern over the disadvantaged. Perhaps this trend is being orchestrated by the newspapers. Quite often, the newspapers carry pictures of prominent citizens or social clubs making donations to institutions which cater for the disabled or disadvantaged persons. The coverage may go beyond mere captions to include speeches made during the presentation. Surely, these pictures and speeches betray an increasing public awareness. But the total extent of public concern is still small and most of the activities aim to meet the immediate, basic and physical needs of the disadvantaged persons. Newspaper campaigns often produce such results. The general attitude is still characterized by pity, disgust or egotistic self-advertisement. Individuals and social clubs advertise themselves through such donations.

No harm; except that such measures do not produce permanent solutions.

A clearer evidence of the inadequate public concern is the fact that in a nation of eighty million people, there are fewer than thirty-six institutions for special education. Few of these have adequate facilities or personnel. (See Table I).

II. NATIONAL POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

In the 1970's, the Federal Government embarked on a dynamic and extensive policy formulation on education. The basic philosophy was that education should be an instrument of change, especially of effecting national development "as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be proceeded by an educational revolution." The projected goals were the creation of "a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizen." (2)

The policy formulation devoted some attention to Special Education which is defined as:

> "the education of children and adults who have learning difficulty because of different sorts of handicaps: blindness, partial sightedness, deafness, hardness of hearing, mental retardation, social maladjustment, physical handicap, etc. due to circumstances of birth, inheritance, social position, mental and physical health pattern or accident in later life."

This broad category include not only the disadvantaged but also the exceptionally gifted. Both categories are usually unable to cope or benefit with the normal school class organization and methods.

Table I: Existing Special Education Facilties in Nigeria

July 1975 (Schools, Homes, Open Education)

TOTAL	No. of Facilities	Deaf and Partially Hearing	Blind and Partially Sighted	Physically handi-cap and others.	Total intake of Students	Number on Waiting List.	STAFF		
							Total No. of Teachers	Specialists	Others
B.P. State	2	-	85	27	112	65	11	2	19
E.C. State	6	140	65	122	327	445	30	6	56
Kano State	1	-	16	-	16	26	3	1	1
Kwara State	1	26	-	-	26	290	4	3	12
Lagos State	9	200	74	437	711	355	64	22	107
M.W. State	Open Educ.	-	28	-	28	-	19	5	-
N.C. State	Open Educ. +1	-	24	110	34	-	6	1	3
N.E. State	Open Educ.	-	7	-	7	-	1	-	-
N.W. State	Open Educ.	-	5	-	5	-	-	-	-
Rivers State	1	-	-	9	9	-	-	-	4
S.E. State	Open Educ.	4	3	63	70	-	-	-	-
Western State	Open Educ. +5	151	77	55	283	808	30	5	34
TOTAL;	O.E.-6 Fac.-26 32	521	384	723	1628	1989	169	45	236

NOTE: 1) Total Number of handicapped children on waiting list approx. 160% of the total number being catered for.

2) Number of specialist trained teachers approx. 27% of total number of teachers involved in Special Education.

3) Ratio of non-teaching staff to teaching staff - 236:169.

4) Total recurrent expenditure per pupil - (Boarding) approx. N500 p.a. (Day) approx. N300 p.a. (pre-Udoji).

Source: Special Education Research Information. Federal Ministry of Education Unit, 1977.

The policy makers took cognizance of the inadequate number of trained personnel. For the future, a National Teachers' College for Special Education was proposed. But as a short-term measure, a scholarship programme was planned for those being trained in Special Education at University of Ibadan and Overseas. The point is that there are presently few universities in the country which have facilities or programmes for training teachers in Special Education. It was, therefore, further proposed that Teachers' Colleges in the country should provide "general and basic courses to all prospective teachers who will teach in normal schools but who require such knowledge to identify and help handicapped children."

The policy proposes a crash programme of in-service training for all teachers of handicapped children and has webbed in various government ministries (Health, Education, Social Welfare and Labour) to take special care in identification of the handicapped.

The crux of the government's short-term policy on Special Education is the mechanism designed to operate it. There are three options: Stream lining, whereby cases needing special education are identified, treated and reintegrated into the normal school stream; integration--which is the mode adopted by the policy makers--envisages that "since handicapped children are eventually expected to live in the society... special classes and units will be provided in the ordinary schools under the Universal Primary Education scheme" (U.P.E.). In other words, Special Education will be operated side-by-side with the UPE using two agents--the Special Education Unit which will visit schools and the Special Education teacher who must have benefitted from the crash in-service training

course. The integration technique rejects emphasis on a third option, institutionalization for the reason adduced above.

TABLE 2: Estimated Percentage of Handicapped Children in the Population Aged Six for 1976 U.P.E. Scheme:

		%
i.	Blind and Partially-Sighted	0.1
ii.	Deaf and Partially-Hearing	0.2
iii.	Mentally-Retarded	1.0
iv.	Severe Physical Handicap	0.05
v.	Emotionally Distrubed, Maladjusted	0.8
vi.	Speech Disorders	4.0
vii.	Learning Difficulties	3.0

Source: UNESCO Consultants' Report on Special Education in Nigeria, 1974.

The official policy raises many problems especially as it moves from policy to practice. Firstly, it appears to underestimate the size of those needing Special Education. This is quite understandable since the country does not have reliable census figures. But it is estimated that about 10% of the six-year olds entering Primary Schools under the UPE scheme would require special teachers (Ia; See, Table 2). To confound issues, the Special Education scheme presently operates only at the Primary School level but the government plans to extend it to all levels of the educational system including the Universities. This raises the second problem of facilities which are non-existent even at the Primary School level where the enrollment has rocketed. Some schools have 2,000 children in one-shift or five-hour schooling period.

The lack of facilities raises a third problem that there are no Special Education teachers to operate the government's integration policy. The mechanism of Special Education Unit does not envisage the communication or accessibility problems in a nation lacking good roads.

A fourth problem relates to the range or categories of Special Education envisaged in the national policy. In most countries, Special Education activities start with the Blind and the Deaf (5a). The priority is because their handicap is manifest, their severe deprivation tugs at consciences and their association with non-handicapped individuals is more tolerable than is the case with the mentally-retarded, lepers or even albinos, for instance.

Approximately half of the existing Special Education facilities in Nigeria are for the Blind and Deaf (See, Table 1). A prioritization

scale of the categories of Special Education in Nigeria would appear thus in descending order:

1. Blind and partially-sighted
2. Deaf and partially-deaf
3. Physically handicapped
4. Mentally-retarded
5. Hospitalized children

The last two categories are weakly defined and operated. A host of other categories are unprovided for even in the National Policy; for instance, albinos, emotionally-disturbed, drop-outs, brain-damaged, behavioural and learning problems and so on. Admittedly, the National programme on education asserts that,

> "Government will cater for drop-outs and those who cannot get access to formal education by providing opportunities for self-education." (2)

But this still rings hollow. The impression is that Nigeria did not react to the rediscovery of various categories of the handicapped which occurred in Europe in the 1960's.

One would not wish Nigeria the fate which this produced: there was so much effort in theoretical refinement and categorization of minute areas of Special Education that scholars lost sight of the practical problems. What is at stake is not new discoveries in clarification within Special Education areas, but the recognition that children have varying strategies or cognitive styles they employ to learn to read and write (6, 7, 8).

The lack of adequate facilities becomes equally glaring in the provisions for Children Clinics to provide curative measures and medical

care and to ensure early identification of handicapped children. The Clinics will be attached to hospitals but the hospitals are already expe.iencing teething problems. The patients-doctor ratio is 20,000:1. The adm'nistrative jungle in the hospitals will stifle the laudable hopes.

The direction for Special Education in Nigeria should, therefore, involve a reassessment of social ideology, available resources and practical means of aiding the disadvantaged in her population. The current official proposals point to laudable goals but the mechanism appears to be cumbersome, unclear and holds little possibility of meeting the problem.

III. THE HEAD TEACHER AS A PIVOT

Beyond the analysis of the current trend of Special Education, especially the new official programme, the basic contribution of this paper is to suggest that the Head Teachers in Primary Schools hold more potentials to the effective operation of Special Education in the country. A pilot study on this was carried out in an effort to suggest how the short-term measure could operate effectively.

The pilot study was designed to measure the Head Teachers' awareness, experience, prioritized concerns, involvement and views in Special Education needs among their school populations. The study attempted to cover various geographical areas in the country especially in six states: Ondo, Imo, Anambra, Rivers, Bendel and North-East. Forty-eight Head Teachers of Primary, Secondary and Nursery Schools filled out questionnaires.

This section of the paper will focus on only a small section of the pilot study. Our interest is the responses made as to:

(a) the demands which parents make on schools for help to their children with Special Education needs,

(b) the remedial resources which Head Teachers would employ to cope with Special Education needs in their schools.

To deal firstly with the parents' expectations and demands: Parents' responses seem to oscillate on a continuum which expect teachers to counsel, pay special attention to their children and also discipline them through punishment. (Table 3). Occasionally the expectations involve elements of fancy when, for instance, they expect the teaching technique to solve a host of non-academic problems. Parents shift the major responsibility of finding solutions to special needs of their children to the schools. They would expect the Head Teacher to simply inform them how the problems would be solved. The Parent/Teacher Association is a viable forum for this. The only element of irony is that the parents expect to be consulted regularly.

The deduction from the responses is that parents regard the Head Teacher's role as crucial in dealing with Special Education problems. A brief historical survey of the education of the role of the Head Teacher in Nigerian society would indicate that the responses reflect an entrenched tradition; that the Head Teacher's role embodies enormous potentials for executing new programmes. The Head Teacher played an important role in education, religion, political, cultural and socio-economic changes in most West African societies during the colonial era. At the grass root, he was the intermediary between the communities and the colonizing agents whether missionary or governmental.

Education was an important tool in opening up areas for missionary and evangelical work. The Head Teachers were among the first converts

carefully selected and trained to help administer most of the newly-acquired areas in the face of unhealthy climate to the missionaries. He did his work faithfully but was most effective because he was more acceptable to the indigenes. He was one of them, but he was literate, emulated and understood the ways of the colonial administrators, spoke their language. He therefore became the crucial link for the indigenous people in understanding the policies and rapid changes being introduced around them. They consulted him, for anticipated changes, sought his advice in all areas of life of the society. But most important of all, he impressed the community with his model school. His school children were "disciplined" because they displayed excellent manners, were immaculately clean and followed rigid routines including bible classes and Sunday Church going. Regular attendances and punctuality was demanded of them at all gatherings. He instilled in them the ethical ideals of humanity as well as laudable goals and the unlimited heights to be achieved in literacy. Parents never hesitated to consult him on all matters to deal with children, their physical well being, their day to day behaviour, and often their future.

The Headmaster was, therefore, an important agent of modernization. He was a pioneer, a lay minister with high ethical principles, an innovator in education, a counsellor and consultant on children, familial as well as on the village political order. He was expected to be diplomatic and energetic. His training of both pupils and the teachers under him was spartan and often puritanic in an effort to mould them in the image of the white man. However, he remained a reliable, responsible and trustworthy fellow in the community. He was a moral arbiter and, above

all, a career counsellor to most people, especially in the future of many children.

This laudable public image, the status, the respect and awe accorded to Head Teachers in many deliberations have hardly eroded with time. In addition, the Head Teacher's training, career and rise in his profession encompass many years in the school. There is, therefore, little doubt about his professional attitude, commitment and aptitude. He displays a wealth of knowledge on education of children as well as a depth of experience. Most parents would rather accept the directives and intervention of the Head Teacher in the school life of their children, than what the teacher or some other specialist has to say. The only other person whose efforts would be seen as well-meaning or even gospel is the medical doctor. Other paramedical personnel do not command the same respect.

It is thus quite doubtful whether parents would display the same enthusiasm to the intervention of an attached trained Special Education person. The Head Teacher is more likely to evoke more trust.

The Head Teachers' responses betray an in-depth, grass root grasp of Special Education needs of Nigerian schools and remedial methods suitable to them. These emphases are quite different hierachically from those of the government. On the top of their list are behavioural problems, serious emotional difficulties, the aggressive, truancy and absenteeism. The major Special Education needs confronting them centre specifically around learning and classroom activity. It is obvious that much wider range of Special Education needs operate in their schools than is the concern of the National Policy.

TABLE 3: Head Teachers' view of Parents demands on Specialized Services for Children from Schools

Type of Solution	f.%
Magical solutions from school	4.23
Special attention from teacher	8.27
Teaching technique	12.7
Blaming school	.84
Influence of other children	.84
Financial sponsorship	2.54
Medical attention/advice	6.77
Punishment/disciplinary measures	16.9
Reward and encouragement	3.38
Parental consultation involvement	10.16
Counselling pupils	8.47
Psychological attention	.84
Special Aids provision	4.23
Recommendation to Special Institutes	6.47
Parental direction or counselling by school	8.47
T o t a l	100

The Head Teachers advocate a different mechanism for Special Education. Their main considerations for appropriate remedial measures are institutionalization, medical attention, special aids, counselling, remedial and corrective teaching. These offer immediate to long-range corrective measures. All categories of problems enjoy some involvement of special aids and variations in teaching techniques in remedial measures. In their view, counselling seems to be concentrated on behavioural, speech, mental and learning problems while medical attention is concentrated on manifested physiological problems. Institutionalization is applied to most problems but with very little emphasis, probably as a last resort. A similar situation applies to punishment and psychological therapy even though they are both employed to solve behavioural difficulties principally.

The Head Teachers also offer other interesting suggestions as supplementary measures. The most frequent amongst these are school meals, health education, well-equipped schools and governmental support morally and financially. Others include, well formulated school ideals for the guidance of pupils, prompt report of serious problems, vigilance on pupil behaviour, adequate lessons on moral instruction, larger schools, frequent parent-teacher meetings and education of parents on the problems of their children.

The pilot study leads to the simple conclusion that the Head Teachers' role needs a closer attention than ever. They offer a higher wealth of experience and insight into the problems of Special Education than the migratory Special Education officer and they also evoke more confidence

TABLE 4: Head Teacher's view of resources and materials they would employ to meet special needs of students in their schools

Type of Problem	Remedial Resources										
	Distribution of the Special education needs	Sepcial Personnel or Teacher	Parents Counselling Involvement	Institutional Attention	Medical Attention	Punishment	Teaching Techniques	Special Aids	Remedial Work/ Corrective Inter-vention	School Counselling	Psychological Therapy
	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%
Blind	3.31	31.25	-	31.25	6.25	-	-	31.25	-	-	-
Deaf	3.73	27.3	-	22.2	5.5	-	-	44.14	-	-	-
Visual problems	6.01	10.3	-	-	24.13	-	-	58.62	-	3.44	-
Hearing problems	4.14	10	-	5	25	-	-	55	5	-	-
Sickle-cell anemia	3.94	10.52	-	15.7	68.42	-	5.26	-	-	-	-
Albino	2.49	16.66	-	8.33	66.66	-	8.33	-	-	-	-
Epileptic	2.90	14.28	-	14.28	50	-	7.14	7.14	7.14	7.14	-
Lame/Limb deform	2.31	12.5	-	25	31.25	-	6.25	25	-	-	-
Behavior/dis-ciplinary problem	7.7	5.40	-	2.70	-	24.32	10.81	8.10	18.91	27.02	2.70
Serious emo-tional diffi-culties	6.82	12.12	-	3.03	3.03	3.03	6.06	6.06	15.15	33.33	18.18
Aggressive or bully	6.2	6.66	3.33	-	-	13.33	3.33	13.33	33.33	20	6.66
Reading dif-ficulties	4.4	14.28	-	-	4.76	-	4.76	42.85	6.66	19.04	4.76
Speech diffi-culties	5.4	11.53	-	-	3.84	-	3.84	26.92	23.07	26.92	3.84

TABLE 4: Head Teacher's view of resources and materials they would employ to meet special needs of students in their schools (cont.)

Type of Problem	Remedial Resources										
	Distribution of the Special education needs	Sepcial Personnel or Teacher	Parents Counselling Involvement	Institutional Attention	Medical Attention	Punishment	Teaching Techniques	Special Aids	Remedial Work/ Corrective Intervention	School Counselling	Psychological Therapy
	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%	F.%
Slow learner/ Learning difficulties	5.8	21.42	-	-	-	-	28.57	14.28	25	10.71	-
Truancy/Absenteeism	6.2	6.66	13.33	-	-	3.33	13.33	3.33	20	40	-
Dropout	5.6	7.40	14.81	-	-	3.70	7.40	3.70	25.92	27.03	-
Lack of Intelligence-Mental retardation	3.73	11.11	5.55	5.55	5.55	-	22.22	22.22	22.22	5.55	-
Intellectually gifted	5.88	7.14	-	3.57	-	-	46.42	3.57	35.71	3.57	-
Vocationally	5.88	7.14	-	3.57	-	-	35.71	3.57	42.42	3.57	-
Chronically sick	4.6	9.09	4.54	22.72	40.90	-	4.54	-	9.09	9.09	-
Severe Malnutrition	2.5	16.66	41.66	-	41.66	-	-	-	-	-	-

from the parents. They constitute a viable instrument of operationalizing the high ideals in the National Policy and for reappraising the inadequacies of the policy.

Their lacks are obvious: funds, teaching aids and training. Yet, like the proverbial JPs of Tudor England, they are bearing, the brunt of the inadequate measures to operate a new Special Education scheme.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Federal Ministry of Education:
   (a) UNESCO Consultant's Report on Special Education in Nigeria, Lagos, No.v 1974

   (b) Special Education Research Information, Lagos, 1977.

2. Federal Ministry of Information: Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education, Lagos, 1977.

3. Kessler, Jane W. Psychopathology of Childhood, Englewood Cliffs Prentice-Hall, 1966.

4. Kirk, Samuel A. Educating Exceptional Children (2nd ed.) Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

5. UNESCO PRESS:

a. A Study of the Legislation concerning the Special Education of Handicapped Children and Young People, ED/MD/8, Paris 17 Nov. 1969.

b. A Study of the Present Situation of Special Education. ED/MD/16, Paris, 15 March 1971.

c. Case Studies in Special Education, Belgium, 1974.

d. Education for Handicapped Children? Paquerette Villeneure, Belgium, 1970.

e. Expert Meeting on Special Education - Report of the Meeting, ED/SPECED/2, March 1969.

f. Special Education Statistics, CSR-E-8, Dec. 1974.

6. Warren, Jonathan R., "Adapting Instruction to Styles of Learning," Findings, E.T.S., Vol. 1, No. 1, 1974.

7. Witkin, Herman A., et al. "Field-Dependent and Field-Independent Cognitive Styles and their educational implications." Research Bulletin, E.T.S., RB-75-24.

8. Silverman, H., O'Bryan, K.G., Perspectives on Learning Disability, Toronto, IOSE, 1973.